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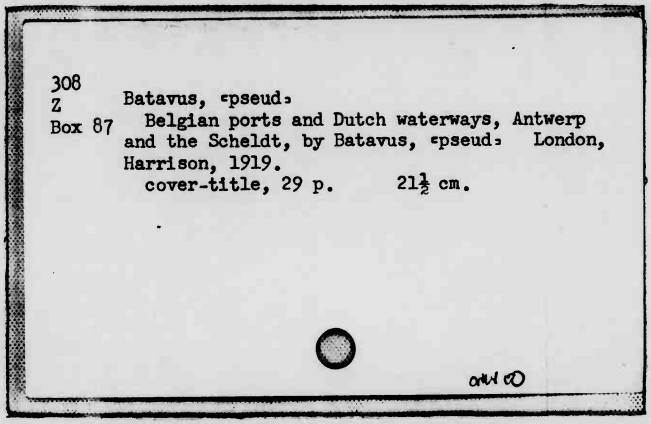
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BELGIAN PORTS AND DUTCH WATERWAYS.

ANTWERP AND THE SCHELDT.

By

BATAVUS.

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BELGIAN PORTS AND DUTCH WATERWAYS.

ANTWERP AND THE SCHELDT.

The port of Antwerp is, at present, largely influencing Belgian politics. This stands to reason. Antwerp being the most prominent port of Belgium, it is imperative to the economic welfare of the country that this great gateway answers its purpose in all respects. Not only should the port be well-equipped, but her approach to the sea should be free and unhampered and her communications with the hinterland should provide ample means for the handling of goods in and outwards.

Supposing, therefore, Belgium had any legitimate complaints to make on that score, it would be her bounden duty to press with all possible emphasis for the removal of such arbitrary impediments in regard to the development of the port of Antwerp.

Now what can be said about the Scheldt in this respect? Or rather: what was the position in the period immediately preceding the war, during which, according to many Belgian publicists, the Dutch administration of the mouth of the river was alleged to have retarded the development of Antwerp? Some writers have even gone as far as to pretend that the Dutch had wilfully hampered her progress to the benefit of the Dutch ports, particularly Rotterdam. Or, in the words of the annexationist "Soir":—

"Holland's bad faith has been proved a hundred times in the matter of dredging, keeping open, lighting, pilot service, and so on, with the result that the stream cannot be said to be free to the Belgians, in spite of all conventions."

The simple reader cannot but conclude from this, that the ports of Antwerp and Ghent, in spite of their favourable geographical situation, cannot compete.

To stick to Antwerp, it is a fact that the port has known

hard times; but that was long ago, and the causes thereof were manifold.

However, from the moment that the river dues on the Scheldt were abolished (1863) and the hinterland, Belgium and Northern France initially, afterwards Germany, that is to say the most closely populated and richest part of Europe, began to develop economically, Antwerp's progress is such that it not only equals, but surpasses the growth of other great ports.

A multitude of figures could be quoted to prove this contention. The following, however, may suffice.

According to Max Oboussier's pamphlet, "The Port of Antwerp and the Economic Conference of Paris," Antwerp, 1917 (one of the enemies of the Dutch administration to wit), the tonnage of the port of Antwerp increased as follows :—

	Total Tonnage.	Average Tonnage per Vessel.
1830	120,333	169
1840	179,291	153
1850	239,165	168
1860	540,444	213
1870	1,362,600	330
1880	3,063,825	684
1890	4,506,277	953
1900	6,720,150	1,240
1910	12,654,153	1,869

The following statistics, taken from the Reports of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce for 1911 and 1912, give an idea of the international traffic :

	In.	*Out.*
	Total value in units of 1,000 francs.	
1870	670,271	391,591
1880	1,252,693	607,766
1890	1,471,931	938,455
1900	1,610,601	1,136,205
1910	2,906,709	2,710,233
1911	3,080,167	2,731,517
1912	3,243,478	3,056,437

	In.	*Out.*
	Total weight in tons of 1,000 k.g.	
1870	1,503,813	662,750
1880	2,695,921	1,084,889
1890	3,801,753	1,949,505
1900	6,385,263	3,501,904
1910	14,447,766	12,472,376
1911	17,080,745	17,084,232

Of these oversea traffic accounts for :

1870	1,182,815	369,364
1880	2,504,725	593,374
1890	3,437,553	1,269,289
1900	5,492,204	2,400,221
1910	9,264,889	6,951,742
1911	10,195,851	7,222,738

One readily sees that this rapid progress corresponds with the development of the interior. The ever-growing balance of tonnage obtained proves this better than anything, as the unloading vessels found more return cargo, so that more of their loading capacity was utilised. And this while the whole of Western Europe was showing a surplus of import over export of many milliards of francs annually. That Antwerp has prospered is proved without any doubt by the quoted figures.

Also, since 1910 her development has not stagnated. According to the Report of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce the tonnage rose in 1911 to 13, 349,633 (average tonnage, 1,936); in 1912 to 13,761,591 (average, 1973); and in 1913 to 14,146,819 (average, 2,005).

A comparison with the other great European ports will show that Antwerp has nothing to complain of as to her progress. The following table is taken from the Report of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce for 1911 :—

	Tonnage in 1870.	In 1910.
Bordeaux	514,437	1,659,068
Genoa	1,392,301	6,619,910
Marseilles	1,523,187	9,441,053
Trieste	960,103	4,198,525
Liverpool	3,416,933	10,881,315
London	4,089,366	12,154,162
Amsterdam	405,109	2,588,885
Rotterdam	1,026,348	10,876,507
Antwerp	1,362,616	12,654,153*

Though Oboussier complains very bitterly about the Dutch Scheldt, he states with pride that, in comparison with Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Bremen, Dunkirk, Genoa, Hamburg, Le Hâvre, London, Liverpool, Marseilles, Rotterdam and Trieste, between 1900 and 1912 Antwerp showed the greatest increase in traffic. In 1870 it occupied the sixth place, in 1880 the third after London and Liverpool, in 1910 Liverpool is superseded and Antwerp comes immediately after London and Hamburg; in 1911 the position is unchanged; in 1912 Rotterdam precedes Antwerp by a small margin; 1913, with the great strike in Antwerp, and 1914, the year of the war, are obviously unfit for comparison.

Even without taking the trouble to calculate the percentage of the increase in development of all these ports severally, it is clearly shown that Antwerp and Rotterdam, unmistakably influenced by the industrial development of the hinterland, show an important increase, in keen competition with one another. It is, however, a well-known and established fact that the Rotterdam waterway has no equal in the whole of

* The net tonnage of Antwerp is calculated in a slightly different way from that followed by the majority of the other ports. It is usual therefore to deduct 10 to 15 per cent. from the Antwerp figures. But this is of no consequence in a comparative review between any given years.

Western Europe for accessibility, and is favoured by nature above Antwerp. Even in the hardest winters Rotterdam is free from ice; not so Antwerp. Rotterdam is a tidal port (tidal difference only 1·3 m.), and Antwerp a tidal port with 4.3 m. difference, the result of which is that Rotterdam can have open docks and that its liners can load and discharge in the open river, while Antwerp has the disadvantage of being worked by locks.

This notwithstanding, Antwerp's progress is almost equal to that of Rotterdam. It is true that Antwerp has other natural advantages: it lies deeper inland and nearer ocean traffic; and in rough weather the mouth of the Scheldt is more accessible than the Meuse. But all this would have been of no avail if, indeed, the mouth of the river had been badly kept up and governed and if the Dutch had thereby stood in the way of the development of Antwerp.

It is very difficult to make comparisons between two ports by means of statistics. The number of in- and out-going vessels, their tonnage, the weight and value of imports and exports can readily be compared; but, besides all this, one must take into account whether the port is a terminal or a transit port; whether a ship is fully loaded or sails in ballast; whether there is a considerable coastwise traffic, &c. And thus the development can really best be ascertained by the proportional increase over equal periods of years.

The *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich* gives the following figures in register tons:—

	1900.	1912.
Hamburg	13,835,000	23,959,000
Rotterdam	11,381,000	22,787,000
Antwerp	12,880,000	27,173,000†

This means, for Hamburg, an increase of 73 per cent., for Rotterdam of 100 per cent., for Antwerp of 111 per cent.

† See note under * about the Antwerp calculations of net tonnage.

The average tonnage per vessel should not be lost sight of, although same is not of considerable importance. According to Oboussier, the average was in the three great Continental ports of Western Europe :—

	Hamburg.	Rotterdam.	Antwerp.
In 1903	653	1,016	1,578
In 1912	766	1,184	1,973

These figures need adjusting, not only because the Antwerp figures have to be reduced by 10 to 15 per cent., but also because Antwerp has very little coastwise traffic with small boats, as compared with the other two. On the other hand, a peculiarity of the Antwerp port is that very many big steamers visit her to complete cargo.

But, comparing the increases in the average tonnage between 1903 and 1912, one finds the following figures :—

Hamburg, 17·8. Rotterdam, 16·5. Antwerp, 25 per cent.

This certainly speaks in favour of the accessibility of the port of Antwerp to large vessels. The simple fact that Antwerp owes a great deal of its importance to the traffic of big liners—before the war no less than 115 foreign steamship companies regularly called at Antwerp—bears witness to the easy navigation of the Scheldt. Several of the biggest German lines called regularly at the port: in 1913–14 the Norddeutsche Lloyd sailed 14 times a year from that port for Australia and 26 times for Eastern Asia. The same company also had a regular service from Antwerp to Brazil and La Plata, as had the Hamburg-Amerika line to the West Indies and Mexico, and the Woermann line to West Africa. The Red Star Line kept up a weekly service to New York. Ships like the *Vaderland*, of 12,017; the *Kroonland* and the *Finland*, of 12,760, and the *Lapland*, of 18,694 tons gross, could reach Antwerp without the slightest difficulty by way of the Dutch Scheldt. But for the outbreak of war the *Belgenland*, of 26,500 tons, the newest Red Star liner, would have touched the port of Antwerp regularly. For the sake of comparison it may be stated that

the biggest ships of the Holland-Amerika line, the *Nieuw Amsterdam* and the *Rotterdam*, measure respectively 17,149 and 24,149 tons gross.

As to the argument that the British and German companies owned still larger vessels, it must not be forgotten that the shipping trade to the United States was distributed over several different ports, and that the leviathans of the Cunard, White Star and Hamburg-Amerika lines would on no account have called at Antwerp. There is no doubt that Antwerp was regularly used by the largest vessels which the trade of the port warranted.

* * *

If, after the foregoing, we pretend that before the war there actually was no Scheldt problem this should cause no wonder.

A perusal of the circumstantial and reasoned Reports of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce from 1907 onwards, in which any foreign difficulties are fully discussed, prove, by inference, that before the war the Scheldt was no impediment to the prosperity of the port of Antwerp. We also fail to find references to the Dutch Scheldt in less recent reports.

But what we do find repeatedly in these reports are complaints about and pressure for improvement of the condition of the Belgian Scheldt and the port itself.

The Report of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce for 1911 sums up many Belgian traffic difficulties. It does not shrink from mentioning delicate questions with regard to international relations. It also complains of the fact that Antwerp's proper fleet remains so small. Not a word about the Dutch Scheldt. On the contrary, it says :—

"La Hollande continue ses relations cordiales et *mutuellement favorables* avec nous."

In the face of this an allegation that Holland wilfully hampers Belgian trade seems rather out of place.

The Report for 1912 again does not mention the Dutch Scheldt. But in the " Considérations générales " of the Report we find a passage in which impediments to the development of Antwerp of an entirely different nature are discussed It says :—

" La Belgique est devenue trop exigue dans les chemins d'accès et de passage qu'elle livre, tant à ses propres produits à l'exportation et aux produits qu'elle tire de l'étranger pour les besoins de l'alimentation de sa population et de l'industrie, qu'aux marchandises transitant par son territoire et par ses ports."

It would be a mistake to think that this in any way refers to the Dutch Scheldt, as the report goes on to say :—

" Toutes no voies sont insuffisantes : lorsqu'il se produit la moindre crue dans les expéditions vers l'intérieur ou vers notre hinterland ou vice-versa, il s'en suit un encombrement sur les quais des ports, sur les canaux et particulièrement sur les routes ferrées."

The Report then gives the information that the port is to be enlarged considerably. The beginning of 1914 was to see the inauguration of 5½ km. of new quays with very deep water, and thus for the accommodation of big steamers. This would allow for an additional traffic of from 10 to 12 million tons. And again the Dutch Scheldt is not mentioned as a possible impediment to this scheme. On the other hand we read :—

" On reste perplexe (*sic !*) devant le problème dont la solution consistera à donner passage, par nos canaux et nos voies forrées aboutissant au port d'Anvers, aux masses de marchandises y appelées par la mise à disposition du commerce maritime de ces bassins et de tous ces quais. C'est à la solution de ce double problème que nos pouvoirs publics compétents ont pour devoir impérieux de s'attacher, sans retard, sans quoi notre grand port national se trouvera engorgé."

Here you see the true picture of Antwerp, painted by the

most competent men. The danger of blocking the port was not a river problem but a land problem. The handling of the goods on the quays and the dispatch overland are to blame, not the traffic on the water.

This is all the more remarkable, because in comparison with other countries Belgium's system of railways was the most elaborate. In 1913 France possessed 9·5 km., Germany 11·8 km., Great Britain and Ireland 12 km. and Belgium 29·9 km. of railway track per 100 square km. Also as regards locomotives and rolling-stock, Belgium was an easy first. In 1911 for every 100 km. of track France possessed 886 trucks and 33 locomotives, Germany 1,049 and 47, the United Kingdom 2,091 and 61, and Belgium 2,060 and 98.

There is, however, another far more conclusive document defeating the accusations levelled against Holland with regard to the Scheldt, namely, the official statistics of the Belgian Treasury (*Tableau General du Commerce de la Belgique avec les Pays Etrangers. Publié par le Ministère des Finances : 3me Partie : Navigation Maritime. Ports Maritimes*). This publication contains a circumstantial account of the condition of the different ports. We quote from the report for 1911, issued in 1912, the following passage about the Scheldt :—

" La distance d'Anvers à la mer est de 88 kilomètres. A 18 km. de la ville, l'Escaut offre l'aspect d'un bras de mer. *Les navires du plus fort tonnage le remontent sans difficulté, jusqu'aux quais d'Anvers*, où ils peuvent accoster sans alléger. . . ."

Follows a warm eulogy of Antwerp, which, already so favoured by its geographical situation, offers one of the finest and safest roadsteads. Belgium never ceases to improve it. The port is already exceedingly well equipped, and this will even be improved upon when the " travaux d'extension des installations maritimes en cours d'exécutions " are finished. " Ceux en projet feront d'Anvers un port sans égal."

Not a word about the Dutch Scheldt. Evidently the Scheldt

did not require any improvements to make Antwerp a port unequalled. This seems quite unquestionable, seeing that, according to the Report itself, the largest steamers berth at Antwerp without any difficulty !

Another recent quotation of interest may be given. In 1918 Prof. Paul Arndt, of Frankfort-on-the-Main, published an interesting study on " Antwerpen, Rotterdam und die deutschen Rhein-mündung " (the Rhine–Emden canal) in the " Finanz und Volkswirtschaftliche Zeitfragen " (50 Heft). The author analyses at length the favourable and unfavourable factors that govern the development of Antwerp and Rotterdam. He discusses nine circumstances unfavourable to Antwerp. One among these is the inadequacy of the Scheldt between Antwerp and the Dutch frontier ; there are no complaints given about the Dutch part of the river.

The same applies to a publication, " Antwerpen, seine Weltstellung und Bedeutung für das deutsche Wirtschaftsleben," by A. Schumacher, published in 1916. This author, who makes some remarks about Holland, unpleasant in other respects, however testifies about the Scheldt :—

" Auf den ersten 70 km. (that is, on Dutch territory) allerdings ist sie mehr eine Meeresbucht als ein Flusslauf und gestattet auch den grössten Dampfer die Einfahrt noch unter Volldampf."

But then he proceeds that further—that is, on the Belgian Scheldt—there are unfavourable curves (with a radius down to 700 m.), narrowing of the channel by breakwaters to 150 m., reduction of the depth to an average of 8 m. at low water and 12·5 m. at high water.

The authority of these German authors may possibly be questioned, but Belgians of undisputed authority have said exactly the same thing. M. G. de Leener, in his excellent study, " La Politique des transports en Belgique," published by the Solvay Institute, complains of the inferiority of the harbour works in Antwerp, this causing a continuous congestion.

And, lastly, it may be mentioned that Camille Jacquart, in his " Le Port d'Anvers " (" La Renaissance Economique de la Belgique," Fasc. II), never mentions the Dutch Scheldt at all. This pamphlet is one of a collection of economic studies published by " Le Crédit Anversois," written during the war and dispatched to the Belgian Government in Le Hâvre :— " L'accueil qu'elles y ont reçu a fait decider leur publication." It is certainly remarkable that in this treatise, devoted to the reconstruction of Antwerp, the Scheldt question is evidently not considered to be of any account.

* * *

Emphatically the administration on the Dutch portion of the Scheldt does not hamper the restoration and the progress of Antwerp's development. Other difficulties present themselves, but they concern the internal affairs of Belgium. Firstly, the improvements of the Belgian portion of the Scheldt, which in the past more than once were kept back in consequence of political dissensions in the Belgian Chamber, or of a struggle between the Liberal-Socialistic city of Antwerp and the Clerical province of Eastern Flanders, which controls the left bank of the river. Other difficulties, as shown so clearly by the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, constitute the inadequacy of the means to expedite the goods overland.

Other faults Antwerp can remedy itself. Arndt and Schumacher both point out that Rotterdam offers better facilities for a quick discharge into barges than Antwerp does. Max Oboussier complains about the lack of co-operation between the different boards of administration in Belgium and in Antwerp itself, whenever the question arises of effecting improvements. Quoting the Report of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, Arndt says that Belgian capital shows less initiative and daring with regard to the port of Antwerp than fits the modern man of business. The German writer is not the only one to complain. The Belgian patriotic writer, Jacquart, points out that the Dutch ports offer fixed rates

from the place of origin to their destination oversea, without additional costs; while in transit *via* Antwerp often very considerable extra costs are charged, on which one had not counted beforehand.

More important still, the writer contrasts the dependable regular Dutch sailing lists, published well in advance, with the "listes fantaisistes comme il s'en publiait souvent à Anvers." For that reason a number of industrials and exporters, particularly from the Liège region, even preferred Amsterdam to Antwerp, one of whom explained to Jacquart the remarkable motives for this preference :—"Certaines infériorités de l'organisation du traffic à Anvers, qui méritent de retenir l'attention des milieux compétents." This informant declared that this difference was so important that in many cases the oversea customers, notably in Italy and the Near East, desired their goods, *e.g.*, rolled zinc, to be shipped at Amsterdam, because of the better facilities in negotiating the bill of lading.

This Liège merchant said :—

"Pendant dix années, nous avons pu constater le fait ; nous avons fait des centaines d'affrêtements pour l'Italie et le Levant et nous avons pu apprécier la régularité du service hollandais. Il serait intéressant de fair relever le tonnage détourné au profit de la Hollande et nous sommes certains d'y voir une progression marquée. Pendant ce même temps, nous n'avons pas constaté un vol de marchandises, de faux frais ou des désaccords sur les documents d'expédition.

"Malheureusement nous ne pouvons pas en dire autant pour les envois faits par la voie d'Anvers. Il était rare, pour nos expéditions via Anvers, qu'un mois se passât sans que nous ayions à constater un vol au déchargement sans que nous ayions des contestations au sujet du nombre de colis renseignés sur la lettre de voiture. On pouvait changer d'agent, avec le suivant c'était la même chose. . . . !"

The same merchant reckons that the expenses for watching,

compulsory storage, rent, insurance and subsequent conveyance to steamer, caused by irregular sailings, often amounted to 5·95 fr. per ton. But even when these costs only amounted to 2·50 fr. per ton, the total costs from Engis to Constantinople, for example, would come to 21·70 fr. per ton, while Amsterdam contracted the same transport for 17 fr. per ton inclusive, not counting the advantages of greater reliability and despatch.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the British Consul at Antwerp, in his report for 1912, complains about the falling off in the "rapidity of despatch," and calls it "very regrettable for the good name of Antwerp."

* * *

In all the extensive literature about the Antwerp port, only one publicist has formulated definite grievances against the Dutch administration of the Scheldt. This publicist is M. Max Oboussier, from whose pamphlet, "The Port of Antwerp and the Economic Conference of Paris," we have quoted above.

This work, it should be noted, was issued in Antwerp by the "Flandria" Publishing Company in 1917—that is to say, during the war and by consent of the German *Kommandantur*.

Oboussier, engineer by profession, was employed by the Flemish University of Ghent and is now a fugitive from Belgium. His book of 1917 opposed the trade policy of the Entente, and fervently advocated a commercial *rapprochement* with Germany after the war, without which, according to him—or to his German principals ?—the port of Antwerp could not prosper.

The fact that the Belgian Scheldt annexationists have no other authority for their grievances is really the *note gaie* of the dispute.

It needs to be observed that Oboussier's contentions have been sharply criticised by Camille Jacquart in his already-referred to work, "Le Port d'Anvers." And the conclusion reached by A. Schumacher in his elaborate work, that "Antwerp

is a port especially suited for ocean traffic. . . . No other port is better suited for the dispatch of the largest liners in all directions," that conclusion cannot be dispelled by a few big words.

The truth of this contention has been illustrated above by unquestionable facts and figures. They also prove unmistakably that the suggestion of unwillingness on the part of the Dutch to keep up the navigability of the Scheldt is untenable. On the contrary, the facts of the case are that more than once Dutch schemes with regard to dredging were considered to be unnecessary by the Belgian parties concerned.

This forces to the conclusion that the complaints about the Dutch administration, made by the Belgian annexationists, and therefore still more the political demands derived therefrom, are *totally unfounded.*

ANTWERP AND THE NAVIGATION ON THE RHINE.

A second grievance, put forward on the part of Belgium, is that Antwerp's communication with the Rhine has been greatly hampered by the erection of a railway dyke connecting the province of North Brabant with the island South Beveland.

It is worth while to examine this matter somewhat fully.

In contrast with the former question, the Belgian publications have not always been silent about the communication with the Rhine. In his "La Politique des transports en Belgique," M. G. de Leener examines this question and is of opinion that the cutting of the dyke at Woensdrecht would secure the quickest and cheapest solution.

It should at once be added that, according to him, the costs of this cutting, of the building of a swivel-bridge, and of the dredging of the East Scheldt, *would have to be borne by the Belgian Government.* This was also the opinion of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, who in 1912, as a compensation for Belgium's co-operation in the canalisation of the Meuse, which was desired by Holland, asked for the removal of the "barrage de Woensdrecht" and the erection of a swivel bridge, adding that :—

"*La Belgique prendrait les travaux à sa charge,* de même que les frais des dragages qui seraient à exécuter pour rendre navigable à nouveau l'Escaut oriental barré et forcément resté dans un état très négligé."

These pronouncements by experts so competent should certainly be remembered in connection with the demands now made from the Belgian side, that a canal, Antwerp-Moerdyk, should be cut, but that the costs should be borne by Belgium and the Netherlands conjointly.

* * *

In this connection the famous Scheldt–Meuse–Rhine canal is also mentioned, of course. The fact that this canal has never materialised, moved the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce in 1912 to oppose the canalisation of the Meuse, which Belgium has always put off. She feared that Rotterdam would take the transports of the Meuse and the Sambre away from Antwerp :—

" Alors que nous n'avons pas même un canal direct à grande section entre Anvers et Liège et que les Hollandais nous refusent le passage par le Limbourg néerlandais avec un canal vers le Rhin."

Besides, that connection with the Rhine had already been considered advisable in the Report for 1910, with a view to the improvements of the Upper Rhine between Strasbourg and Switzerland. The Antwerp Chamber feared that by these improvements Rotterdam would profit considerably more than Antwerp, unless Antwerp possessed a direct communication with the Rhine.

It is very curious that the competition with Rotterdam has always been put to the fore. Still it is always represented from the Belgian side that Holland tries to thwart the port of Antwerp in all possible respects ! This happened in 1912, when Antwerp was still ahead of Rotterdam, and the traffic of the Antwerp port, so different in character from Rotterdam, certainly had no backward tendency.

There was no real cause for apprehension as regards Rotterdam. Rather the opposite. Indeed, the accusation of trade jealousy rather applies to Antwerp than to Holland.

Happily, reasonable voices also made themselves heard in Belgium. About Rotterdam and Antwerp, M. Camille Jacquart wrote in his work, " Le Port d'Anvers," published after the war :—

" Chacun des deux ports a ainsi sa physiononie particulière ; celle-ci correspond au rôle spécial qu'ils jouent dans le travail de distribution mondiale des marchandises et qui

leur est imposé par leur situation géographique et les besoins économiques de leur hinterland.

" Le progrès pour Anvers n'est donc pas à chercher dans une concurrence désordonnée avec Rotterdam pour le trafic rhénan. Il ne faut pas se laisser fasciner par les chiffres bruts de la statistique de la navigation maritime et fluviale. . . ."

* * *

More than one hydraulic engineer has adversely criticised the proposed Scheldt–Meuse–Rhine canal. M. de Leener, for example, writes :—

" Les résultats de ce canal seraient illusoires. Anvers dispose, pour ses relations avec l'Allemagne rhénan, d'une voie naturelle qu'aucune voie artificielle ne pourra égaler au point de vue de l'economie véritable des transports."

He even thinks the construction of a special railway communication between Antwerp and the Rhine more advantageous than a canal. And for a warning he instances the Merwede Canal, intended to provide a shorter communication between Amsterdam and the Rhine, and which has nevertheless fallen far short of the expectations entertained from it, as the following figures testify :—

Between 1901 and 1910 the traffic from Rotterdam to the Rhine increased from about 7,750,000 to 17,750,000 tons, that from Antwerp to the Rhine from 2,750,000 to nearly 7,750,000 tons, while Amsterdam's traffic only increased from 436,000 to 991,000 tons. This in spite of the new Merwede Canal, which has a length of only 68 km. and has only five locks, while a Scheldt–Meuse–Rhine canal would easily have a length of 170 km. and would require at least a dozen locks.

Mr. A. Schumacher, in his book on Antwerp, expresses the opinion that Antwerp is much more a competitor of British than of Dutch ports. The latter have never been able to develop into great ports of call, which is the particular characteristic of Antwerp. This is the reason of its having become the competitor of the old British ports of call, and in particular of London.

On the other hand, Schumacher rightly observes that, even if all obstacles were removed, Antwerp would never be as important a Rhine port as Rotterdam, because of the latter's exceptionally favourable natural situation on the sea and at the mouth of the Rhine. But, adds Schumacher, in economics such secondary circumstances do not always turn the scale.

* * *

In point of fact, the port of Antwerp showed quick progress as regards Rhine traffic in spite of some existing difficulties. There is some uncertainty as to the evidence in respect thereof; they vary in different publications. That of the Central Commission for navigation on the Rhine seems the most reliable.

According to this Commission, the traffic between the Rhine and the Belgian ports was as follows :—

	To Belgian Ports. Tons.	From Belgian ports. Tons.
1906	2,800,000	2,000,000
1907	2,700,000	2,200,000
1908	2,900,000	2,200,000
1909	3,900,000	2,300,000
1910	4,900,000	2,800,000
1911	5,000,000	2,900,000

By Belgian ports we mean almost entirely Antwerp. It also appears from these figures that M. de Leener is perfectly right when he speaks of the exceptional progress during the last ten years up to the war in the tonnage of Rhine craft going to or coming from Belgium, or practically all Antwerp.

Whether a shortening of the route would have any influence on that traffic is, however, very questionable.

The principal cause of this increase was that the freights down-stream were always low, because the supply of tonnage always far exceeded the demand, which resulted in a very keen competition among owners.

Antwerp being an important outlet for exports, always had a considerable down-traffic and benefited very much by these low freights, the result of which was also very pronounced as regards the tariffs from Antwerp to the Rhine. The owner who goes from Antwerp to the Rhine and is assured of a return freight is satisfied with lower rates.

These favourable circumstances do not apply to Rotterdam.

* * *

If in spite of this favourable state of the freight market, Antwerp and Rhine traffic has not reached the importance of that of Rotterdam, the reason for this is due more to other reasons than to the fact that the South Beveland Canal means a longer route by 50 km.

In the first place, Rotterdam's advantage is a natural historical one. The traffic between Holland and the Rhine is of much older date. The consequence is that the Dutch Rhine fleet is much bigger. But that of Antwerp is on the increase.

The Report of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce for 1907 already notes :—

" L'accroissement considérable et constant de la flotte du Rhin, dans laquelle les bateaux de nationalité belge prennent une place très respectable."

The Report quotes for that year 1,330 Belgian, as against 2,411 German and 3,908 Dutch Rhine vessels. But above all is the equipment of Antwerp for the Rhine traffic far inferior to that of Rotterdam. Apart from the fact that the facilities for transhipment in midstream from sea-going vessels into barges and *vice versa* are greater in Rotterdam than in Antwerp, the latter port—and this is her own fault—has remained considerably behind in the matter of discharge, particularly of grain and ore. Already, in 1908, Rotterdam possessed six grain elevators, and in 1912 these were increased to 24. It was only much later and, as appears from the publications of the Chamber of Commerce, only very hesitatingly that Antwerp went in for these modern indispensable requisites. In 1911

Antwerp had only two, in 1914 only six out of 12 which it had resolved to adopt, truly a great handicap.

Rotterdam uses modern ore-discharging appliances, of which Antwerp had none as recently as 1914. This easily explains Rotterdam's superiority as a transit port for grain and ore, much more than the relatively smaller difficulty and higher costs of a longer route.

* * *

The objections raised by Antwerp against the route now followed, *via* Hansweert and Wemeldingen, are much exaggerated. They certainly do not explain Rotterdam's supremacy.

The West Scheldt being an arm of the sea, higher insurance premiums have to be paid for river vessels using her. But these extra expenses are much less than those which would be incurred if the vessels had to use a Scheldt–Meuse-Rhine canal with a dozen locks, to say nothing of the greater wear and tear of the ships caused by constantly passing through locks.

Belgium readily recognises that the canal through South Beveland is kept in good order. Rhine barges of 2,000 tons can go through it, and new locks in course of construction will meet the objection that a fleet of 2,000 tons cannot pass through the locks at one time.

This does not satisfy Belgium. They complain that barges of 3,000 tons cannot pass through the locks. That is so, but barges of that capacity have not proved a success at all. The report of the mixed Belgo-Dutch Commission of Engineers, who studied the canalisation of the Meuse, issued in 1912, did not favour barges larger than 2,000 tons.

The one and only barge of 3,000 tons used on the Rhine was the *Karl Schroers* 31, and did not answer the expectations. A second experiment in that respect was a failure; the unmanageable barge *De Smet de Naeyer* foundered in the Binger Loch.

Barges of more than 1,000 tons on the Rhine are the exception. Out of a fleet of 10,000 sailing and towing vessels, only 1,300 were of such capacity. The average tonnage of the Dutch Rhine vessels in that year amounted to 300 to 400 tons, of the German to 700 to 800 tons. The larger barges moreover served especially the ore traffic, which does not suit Antwerp, and it is very doubtful that the port will ever draw that traffic to her, whatever the circumstances.

There may have been a tendency to extend the tonnage, but even then 2,000 tons has proved to be the most practical unit.

The proposed canal would be very costly, both as regards construction and upkeep. And even if it were projected for barges of the very high capacity, the costs of navigation would probably be such as to compel the trade to use the old route. For, after all, the importance with regard to the transport of heavy non-perishable cargo is not that it takes a little longer time, but that the expenses should be as low as possible.

GHENT—TERNEUZEN.

Complaints about the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal for a long time were so vague as to make refutation extremely difficult. Then, at last, they were expressed in a more precise form by Senator Coppieters, in an interview with the Brussels *Peuple*. A correspondent in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* of March 25 subjected M. Coppieters's statement to a searching examination.

"The whole interview," he says, "is a concatenation of inexactitudes. Various points could be enumerated to prove that in the construction and ameliorations of the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal there has been a neglect of Dutch rather than of Belgian interests. . . ."

The correspondent then proceeds to give a refutation of Senator Coppieters's allegations.

"The Dutch part of the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal has received its present dimensions through works executed between 1900 and 1910, which were the result of negotiations terminated on July 20, 1895, and modified by the agreement of March 8, 1902.

"The agreement of July 20, 1895, has been preceded by the creation of a commission of experts from both countries. The agreement stipulated, *inter alia*, that a new sluice should be constructed at Terneuzen, having a length of 140 metres, and the width of 15·75 metres. The depth of the ameliorated canal was to be 8·05 metres beneath the normal level of the canal, while the bridges over the canal would leave a clear passage of 21 metres. It was further stipulated that the sluices at Sas van Gent (where a larger sluice was also to be constructed), and which formerly divided the canal into two sections with a different level, would henceforth usually be kept open, so as to make one single section of the whole Ghent-Terneuzen Canal. I shall come back to the exception to this rule. Concerning the dimensions of the canal profile, it was further decided that it would have a surface of 350 metres square in the rectilinear parts of the canal, with a certain widening at the curves. All these dimensions were determined

entirely in accordance with the desires of the Belgian representatives, without any remark whatever being made on them from the Dutch side. We even believe that the Dutch delegates remarked that the proposed dimensions appeared insufficient to them, considering the requirement of the times. But as the ameliorations were being made entirely for the benefit of Belgium, there was no reason to insist further on this point.

"After the conclusion of the agreement of 1895, the plans for the Dutch and Belgian parts of the canal were drawn up by officials of both countries respectively. For the Dutch section this was done in continuous consultation with the Belgian waterways authorities, and with their approval. The Belgian Government paid for the ameliorations on Dutch territory. The profiles of both parts were almost identical. The width at the bottom of the canal was to be 20 metres (in the Belgian part, 19·50 metres). But owing to the Dutch experts being convinced that the Belgians also would soon consider the new dimensions too exiguous, the Dutch plans had already allowed for a future considerable widening and deepening.

"In 1901, when the construction of the new sluice at Terneuzen had already started, the Belgians also began to realise that the works which were going to be executed in accordance with the 1895 convention, would not be sufficient to enable Ghent to compete with the great seaports. New negotiations were opened, which led to relatively rapid results, by the agreement of March, 1902. During these negotiations, the Dutch again entirely accepted the Belgian view in regard to the dimensions. It came in very useful, that in the planning of the new canal profile, the Netherlands Waterways Administration had already provided for the necessity of further changes.

"Indeed, it was found possible, without too great slackening of work, to give the canal a depth of 8·75 metres, with a width of 24 metres at the bottom, and a width at the surface of 67 metres. On the Belgian part, the widening was even carried

further, probably because there the execution of the work was not yet so advanced as here., In the agreement of 1902 it was also stipulated that the Terneuzen sluice would receive a width of 18 metres. As it was possible to foresee that later on probably a further widening would be required, and that then an even larger sluice would have to be constructed at Terneuzen, it was decided that the bridges would have a greater length, 26 metres, and that the new sluice of Sas van Gent would have a similar width of 26 metres.

" The contention of M. Coppieters that the smaller dimensions of the canal on Dutch territory are due to intentional obstruction is therefore not in accordance with facts.

" According to M. Coppieters, in consequence of the smaller width of the Dutch section, sea ships cannot pass each other except at two points, where the canal is wider. If M. Coppieters had taken the trouble to get information from one of the Belgian pilots, who regularly navigate the canal, the absolutely untrue character of this assertion would not have escaped him. Sea-going vessels pass each other at every point of the Dutch section. It has not even been found necessary that during the passing, one of the ships should be moored on the bank. There is no loss of time, therefore, through ships having to pass each other at certain given points.

" But this is not all, says M. Coppieters. The bridges in Belgium leave a clear passage of 27 metres, those in Holland only one of 15. Everybody will read this passage as implying that Ghent can be reached only by ships which can pass a bridge with an opening of 15 metres. Now, this is not true. The bridges of the ameliorated Dutch section have a passage of 26 metres. Only at Sluiskil, in the bridge for normal traffic, there is, except the passage of 26 metres, also a second one of 15 metres. If a ship is too big for this second opening, it goes through that of 26 metres. The assertion made during the interview is therefore terribly misleading.

" Then M. Coppieters says that the dimensions of the sluices are of great importance for a harbour, and in this connection he compares Ghent with Antwerp, Zeebrugge and Ostend.

But, as has already been stated, the Belgian Government alone is responsible for the dimensions of the Terneuzen sluices and for all the works executed on Dutch territory. If Belgium had wanted them to be larger, this desire would undoubtedly have been satisfied by the Dutch Government, with the understanding, of course, that Belgium would bear the costs. We are even able to announce that if the construction of a larger sluice at Terneuzen were decided upon, no new expropriations would be required, as the place has already been made available. This certainly does not point to a hostile attitude on the part of the Dutch Government.

" Then the interview contains an assertion which it seems incomprehensible that M. Coppieters could have made. We mean the assertion that on the Belgian portion the illumination is continuous, while in Holland only Terneuzen, Sluiskil and Sas van Gent are illuminated. Anyone can realise the untruth of this assertion, because every night one can see the Dutch section of the canal from the Scheldt electrically illuminated until dawn. Before the war this was also the case for the Belgian part, and navigation continued throughout the night. At present only the Dutch section is illuminated, the Belgian not yet, so that at present night navigation is only possible on the Dutch section.

" M. Coppieters further says that the Dutch pilotage refuse to send to the Ghent pilotage telegraphic information about the draught of ships which are leaving Terneuzen, and that it is therefore impossible to take measures in order to heighten the water level, if required. In reply to this it may be stated, that it has never been necessary to heighten the level of the canal. But M. Coppieters forgets that besides a Dutch pilotage, there is also a Belgian pilotage at Terneuzen. Most of the ships that are going up to Ghent, have a Belgian pilot. If it is necessary telegraphically to inform Ghent of the draught of ships coming up from Terneuzen, could this not be done by the Belgian pilotage ?

" We need not even insist on the fact that the shipping companies and those for whom the ships are destined in Ghent have their agents in Terneuzen, who wire the arrival of the ships.

" It is a fact that the maximum speed allowed on the Dutch part is less than on the Belgian. But that difference is less than would appear from the interview. This smaller maximum speed is due to the smaller profile of the Dutch section and has been determined after experiments made in conjunction with the Belgians.

" Let us add that the saving of time which would result from allowing the same speed on the Dutch section as on the Belgian would, under the most favourable conditions, be less than half-an-hour. It is very rare that captains are fined for exceeding the maximum speed. We have been assured that during the last eight years this has not happened once. Of course it happens just once in a time that they are cautioned for excessive speed.

" After all that precedes, it must be clear how much remains true of M. Coppieters's assertion of conditions prevailing, in consequence of the fact that the Belgians can undertake no work on the canal without authorisation from the Dutch. It also appears, and more thorough examination of the history of the question will only confirm this impression, how completely unwarranted is the assertion of M. Coppieters, that at every request the diplomatic negotiations are delayed, and that satisfaction can never be obtained.

" The interview then continues to heap inexactitude upon inexactitude.

" The works of improvement are paid for by Belgium. This is only fair as they are being undertaken entirely for the benefit of Belgium. But that all the work of digging, of bridge and sluice building on Dutch territory are executed by Dutch contractors as the Senator asserts, is positively untrue. Everybody who remembers the work done between 1900 and 1910, knows that it was undertaken for a large part by the Belgian firm of contractors, A. Medaets and H. De Clercq, of

Uccle. Without aiming at completeness, we will mention, among the important work done by Belgian contractors, the new sluice of Terneuzen, with polder-sluice attached, the dry-dock for sluice-gates at Terneuzen, the new sluice, and the foundations of the revolving bridge of Sas van Gent, the sluice-gates and the upper structure of the same bridge of Sas van Gent, the foundations and upper structure of the bridges for ordinary and railway traffic at Sluiskil, the revolving bridge of Terneuzen and furthermore, certain important excavations.

" Only the work for the improvement of the canal has been paid for by Belgium. That Belgium has also paid 20 million francs for Terneuzen harbour, which competes with Ghent, is not true. Belgium has not paid one centime for this work. And on what grounds could she have been made to do so ?

" In the 1902 agreement it is stated that the yearly sum to be paid by Belgium for the upkeep and services of the canal would be raised to 94,500 guilders, in connection with the improvements made. Moreover, Belgium also pays for the electric illumination, etc., of the canal. Is the sum of 94,500 guilders extravagant ? Looking at the budget for 1919 (Chap. IX.), we see that the costs for the upkeep of the canal are estimated as follows :—

	Guilders
Upkeep of canal and work on canal	70,000
Upkeep painting bridges and building ...	15,000
Dredging canal harbours	22,000
Repairs covers of cellars for machinery, western sluice in Terneuzen	6,000
Total	113,000

" Added to this should be the salaries of the canal personnel. The number of officials, to whom belongs the harbourmaster of Terneuzen, and the sluice and bridge attendants, is 33. Other members of the personnel, such as the Terneuzen engineer with his clerks and technical staff at Terneuzen and Sas van

Gent, are not counted. These figures will suffice to prove that the 94,500 guilders paid by Belgium are no exaggerated amount, especially when one realises that the older the works become, the more expenditure for their upkeep is needed.

" Senator Coppieters then asserts that ' It seems incredible, and yet it is true ! ' We would rather say, ' It seems incredible how M. Coppieters juggles with poor Truth.' The rest of the interview also contains equally unallayed untruth.

" M. Coppieters says that to evacuate the waters of floods in Flanders, only a rise of 10 centimetres above the normal canal level is allowed. When that limit is reached , the Dutch authorities close the sluice at Sas van Gent and navigation is interrupted. What truth is there in this ?

" According to Article 1 of the convention of 1895, the sluices at Sas van Gent can be shut *inter alia* when the water level at Sas van Gent rises to 10 centimetres or more above the normal level. This stipulation was necessary because the canal level between Terneuzen and Sas van Gent had already been raised in consequence of that agreement, and care had now to be taken that the level on the lower part of the canal should not become so high that the ditches in the adjacent lands would be flooded, and damage these grounds. If the Sas van Gent sluice gates are closed, this does not mean an interruption of navigation. Only a loss of time is involved while the ships pass through the locks. In normal times, however, navigation has never suffered from this arrangement, because the Sas van Gent sluice gates have always been kept open, and were closed only once, *i.e.*, when, during the German occupation in Ghent the canal level became so high, that the Sas van Gent sluice had to be shut. That high level was probably the result of German ignorance of the existing situation. Otherwise this measure had never been taken, though it repeatedly happened that the canal level exceeded the fixed points by more than 10 centimetres. From this it appears sufficiently clear how completely unfounded this complaint is, and how the Dutch waterways administration does really consider the interests of Ghent in the first place."

Thus far the article in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*. The official statistics of the Belgian Treasury may again be consulted to prove that before the war no complaints whatever were made about the canal, and that the port of Ghent has made considerable progress in course of time. Here are the figures :—

	Number of Ships.	Net Tonnage.
1840	147	15,312
1850	174	24,052
1860	353	48,925
1870	386	73,203
1880	648	210,764
1890	944	428,795
1900	1,114	696,745
1910	1,248	930,964
1911	1,317	1,020,905

It should be taken into consideration that since 1884, for statistical purposes, the Moorsom-ton has been adopted, which compares with the old standard as 1,000 to 1,168.

Finally, it should be noted that after all Ghent is only a minor port, and that in the years immediately preceding the war the view was generally accepted that all Belgium's energy should be centred on Antwerp, being the only national sea-port of importance.

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